

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 February 2011

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Peter Balaam “ Carol Fox “ Robin Hazelton “ Julie Jackson “ Tilly May “ Mike Perry “ Clive Rickhards “ Carolyn Robbins “ John Ross “ June Tandy (Chair)
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**Parent Governor
Representatives** Alison Livesey

Teacher Representative Max Hyde

**Invited
Representatives** Chris Smart (Governor Representative)
Diana Turner (Governor Representative)

Other County Councillors Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder
for Children, Young People and Families)

Officers David Bristow, School Improvement Officer – Performance Data
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Learning and Achievement
Liz Holt, Assistant Head of Service – Manager of
Commissioning Support Service
Bob Hooper, Head of School Improvement
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator
Jane Pollard, Democratic Services Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence for part of the morning session were received on behalf of Councillor Carol Fox and Councillor Tilly May and for the afternoon session from Alison Livesey, Rex Pogson and Chris Smart.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Julie Jackson declared a personal interest as her daughter currently uses post 16 transport.

Councillor Carolyn Robbins declared a personal interest as her granddaughter currently uses post 16 transport.

A general declaration was made for all relevant Councillors and members of the Committee in their roles as School Governors.

(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 December 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010 were agreed with the following corrections:

Page 2 – 1. General (2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The words “and as a member of the management committee of a PRU (Item 7).” To be added to the end of the Declaration of Interest made by Councillor Julie Jackson.

Matters Arising

Page 6 - 7. Feedback from PRU Select Committee

It was noted that Geoff King had not yet responded to the concerns raised by Chris Smart, and the Chair asked that he be asked to provide this information to the Committee as a matter of urgency.

Page 6 - 7. Feedback from PRU Select Committee

Councillor Peter Balaam asked if there had been any decision made in terms of the changes to the PRU and ringfencing of savings.

Councillor Heather Timms noted that there would be a report to the Cabinet on 17 February setting out the Strategic Plan for the PRU.

Page 7 – 7. Feedback from PRU Select Committee

The Chair reported that all of the recommendations made to the Cabinet had been agreed as written.

(4) Chair’s Announcements

None.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

There were no questions put to the Portfolio Holder.

4. The Implications for Local Authorities of the DfE White Paper “The Importance of Teaching”

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families summarising the key issues in the White Paper “The Importance of Teaching” and highlights the main implications for local authorities.

Bob Hooper, Head of School Improvement and David Bristow, School Improvement Officer – Performance Data gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Part of the new arrangements would required Local Authorities to, where necessary, challenge schools, call in Ofsted, oppose admissions and be more business-like on traded services.
2. In response to a query regarding the clawing back of school surpluses, it was noted that the Government would be reviewing the funding of academies in the near future and this issue was likely to be included in that review.
3. Within the Education Bill there was an expectation on Local Authorities to play a strategic role in bringing schools together, where appropriate, to improve attainment and pupil progress. Under the current system if a school was in trouble the Local Authority would provide sufficient and appropriate support for improvement. In the future that role would change to one of commissioning outstanding schools to support schools in difficulty.
4. The pupil premium had been set at £430 for every child known to be eligible for free school meals in any school. The success of this additional funding would be measured through exam results. Bob Hooper added that one of the new measures Government was keen to focus on was the English Baccalaureate. It was also noted that under the new system School Exclusion Panels would be replaced by Review Panels, who would be able to ask a school to reconsider an exclusion. There would also be a requirement on schools to retain financial responsibility for excluded pupils for the remainder of that academic year, even if they moved to an Academy School.
5. The importance of families registering for Free School Meals was acknowledged, as this would benefit pupils in a school as well as whole school communities, through the pupil premium.
5. New Academies would receive a payment of £500,000 a year. It was anticipated that this funding would continue on a year on year basis, but not on the same level.

6. Under the new Bill the Local Authority will have a strategic planning role rather than an intervention role. There was a presumption that schools in Ofsted categories of concern would become Academies. Local Authorities could only intervene if it was felt that School Governors were not making the right decisions and were blocking school improvement. Non-academy schools that were categorised as satisfactory would be monitored closely, and the expectation was that the Local Authority would ensure support to the school through another successful school and that strategic plans were in place to ensure improvement.
7. In response to a query relating to Government's ability to take land from Local Authorities for Academies, Bob Hooper noted that this was an urban issue where there may not be sufficient land or buildings available and every effort was being made to ease routes to Academies, but that this may have knock-on issues across the country.
8. The school improvement team will be much smaller in the future and would have responsibility for maintenance, advice and data analysis. This would include a key role in the remote alerts function, which would require greater sophistication in monitoring triggers, such as first choice preferences for schools. There would also not be any support offered to outstanding or good schools in the future and resources would have to be targeted well to prevent failure. It was noted that where there were fewer monitors and less oversight, the responsibility of those monitors would be far greater.
9. School organisation and planning would be challenging, but the Local Authority would still have a duty to ensure sufficient places now and in the future, including Academies. Where it was felt that an Academy needed to accept additional pupils, the Local Authority would approach the sponsors with a plan for the area and bring forward statutory proposals. If this was rejected by the sponsors, a decision would be sought from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. Academies were still required to operate within the Admissions Code, with statutory mechanisms for the control of admissions already in place. It was acknowledged, however, that monitoring the practice of this by Academies may be difficult, but if problems were identified, the Local Authority would approach the Governing Body and if that failed, the Office of the Schools Adjudicator. Mark Gore pointed out that admission arrangements for any school applied only in the event of over-subscription. If the school had the capacity, it was obliged to take the student applying.
10. Local Authorities could oppose proposals on the grounds that proposed changes were not supported by local parents or in the interest of children and school improvement. Bob Hooper added that there were a number of 11-16 schools exploring the possibilities of expanding to include 6th forms. The Local Authority would have to take a judgment on whether this was in

the interest of young people and support or not on that basis, which may conflict with the wishes of institutions.

11. Free Schools would receive their funding directly from central Government with an element of contribution from the Local Authority.
12. The importance of school leadership was crucial and it was noted that the Local Authority would have an important and difficult role in supporting failing schools under the new model, particularly where schools did not acknowledge their own failure.
13. It was noted that in the future the Local Authority would no longer nominate a School Governor and that the Governing Bodies would play an important role in picking up alerts that were not obvious in data. There needed to be more training or signposting for advice to school governors to enable them to carry out their roles.
14. Concern was expressed at the remoteness of the Local Authority in a commissioning role, and the potential for problems to arise. Bob Hooper acknowledged that there was a risk to transition, which again meant that closer attention would need to be paid to alert triggers.
15. It was unlikely that small schools would become Academies, but they could join a larger group of schools under the Federated Academy Model.
16. Concern was expressed about the backlog on the programme to replace temporary classrooms.
17. Government proposals were to have equal funding for all 6th form provision, which would result in a reduction to the current level of funding received by 6th Form Colleges.
18. It would be difficult under the new role for Local Authorities to monitor how individual schools distributed their funding. This was a decision for schools and the Local Authority role was to hold schools to account for outputs and pupil performance.
19. Under the new arrangements, schools would be judged on improvements made by a child with no capping on their performance, which would address some of the unintended detrimental effects of the current system.
20. Entry level qualifications for teachers was being raised as it was Government's view that the whole system depended on good quality, well-trained teachers.
21. Max Hyde, Teacher Representative, noted her concern about national training schools. She said that the tendency was for models to be secondary-driven, but that there were more problems with smaller primary schools. She added that there may need to be some strategic input from Local Authority level.
22. Max Hyde also stated that the focus on core educational values should not exclude other important areas, such as the entitlement for young people for proper sex education.
23. Concern was raised that the Education Bill represented a move away from vocational education, which was more suitable to the abilities and interests of some young people.

The Chair thanked Bob Hooper for his informative and interesting presentation.

The Committee noted the implications of the White Paper “The Importance of Teaching” and agreed to receive an update at an appropriate time in the future.

5. Report on School Performance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families summarising the attainment of pupils in Warwickshire in 2010 public examinations and highlighting differences in performance across the county.

David Bristow gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee, including additional District information, which was tabled at the meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

1. It was noted that the English Baccalaureate was expected to improve pupil’s chances in the job market and in gaining places to higher education.
2. The progress of some vulnerable pupils tended to be lower than that of their peers, but this was a national issue. A broader range of data was being measured in order to identify these pupils, what individual issues were and what needed to be done to ensure progress and improvement. Better geographical data would help to target failing pupils.
3. Results that included the English Baccalaureate were lower in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth, where more vocational options had been selected.
4. Warwickshire was a good place to be a pupil, with improving standards, particularly at age 16, but there were still areas, schools and groups of pupils which were underperforming.
5. International comparisons had not been made for a number of reasons including the differences in curricula and differences in testing of age groups.
6. David Bristow undertook to investigate the declining KS2 attainment figures for Weddington & St. Nicolas, Whitestone & Bulkington and others with high FSM take-ups and to respond to members of the Committee by e-mail. He added that this could have been due to the boycott of exams.
7. It was noted that the approach of the previous Government had been to promote diplomas and applied learning. This Government’s approach was to leave it to individual schools to decide, but there was some concern that applied learning courses could be expensive for schools. The Local Authority would need to ensure there were sufficient pathways and breadth of choice available within the 14-19 curriculum, with a

- broad academic background for all and also concentrating on giving every child the best opportunities for them.
8. Warwick University was looking to establish a new 14-19 technical school on their site, and it was thought there may be more technical schools established in the future.
 9. There was some discussion about areas of deprivation where results had been good and it was noted that the latest analysis showed that any child could do well with good teaching, good support from home and good application. Children who were economically deprived were not necessarily culturally deprived and there needed to be balance to all aspects of children's lives. David Bristow added that when advising schools, a good tracking system, regardless of pupil background, was always recommended. It was agreed that this would be a useful area to research.
 10. In response to a query relating to whether the Local Authority would be in a position to lobby Government to include a larger spread of subjects within the Humanities section of the English Baccalaureate, Bob Hooper stated that the Local Authorities had not yet received any steer from Government on the Baccalaureate. He added that Warwickshire SACRE had recommended to the DfE that RE should be included under the Humanities subjects, and this had been rebuffed on the basis that RE was already a compulsory subject for secondary schools.
 11. Outstanding schools with exceptional Heads would be approached to participate in partnerships with struggling schools, but this would need to be approved by the Governing Bodies as these arrangements would include time commitments to be made by the Head.
 12. It was expected that the introduction of the pupil premium would result in a higher uptake of Free School Meals, as it would be to the benefit of schools to encourage parents to sign up for Free School Meals.
 13. It was broadly agreed that pupil attainment would be a good topic for a Task and Finish Group, but that this would have to be done at a time when more information was available.
 14. Good leadership and an influential style of good quality teaching within any school could impact on attainment and achievement.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that they:

- Make representation to Government on the prescriptive nature of the English Baccalaureate.
- Investigate what further measures need to be taken as a Local Authority to ensure that the differences in attainment of children and young people in receipt of Free School Meals or with Special Educational Needs were addressed.

- Take the necessary steps to ensure that those parents who were eligible for Free School Meals did apply.
- The issues related to “narrowing the gaps” in performance for all groups of children across the county needed to be addressed.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a further report when details were available to be able to identify any impact on attainment.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee then Resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining part of the discussion on this item on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

David Bristow presented the confidential papers that had been distributed to Members of the Committee. The following points were noted:

15. Currently, Warwickshire’s School Performance Intervention Policy meant that every school had an annual review of performance with their School Improvement Partner.
16. Schools in an Ofsted Category 3, which were at risk of being inadequate, received significant support, were required to have intervention plans in place and were monitored closely. Regular meetings were also held with the Chairs and Governing Bodies. Bob Hooper undertook to provide to Members a list of schools at graded levels, those that were receiving additional support and the level of that support.
17. Any school achieving below floor targets or where progress was below the national average, would be receiving intervention from the Local Authority. Levels of intervention were determined school by school in conjunction with the School Improvement Partner.
18. DfE would question why any school in an Ofsted category of concern was not being turned into an Academy School, and if this was not being considered, a substantial plan for improvement would need to be in place.
19. Data on Super Output Areas was determined by where children lived and not where they went to school, excluding children in independent schools or children attending schools out of county. Bob Hooper undertook to provide to Members of the Committee deprivation numbers for Super Output Areas and a graph showing the deprivation index against results.

The Chair thanked Bob Hooper and David Bristow for their work that had gone into the presentation.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that the Directorate consider how to provide Members

educational profiles at a divisional level on an annual basis, excluding confidential information.

The Committee went back into public session at 3.20 pm.

6. Work Programme 2010-11

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

Liz Holt, Assistant Head of Service – Manager of Commissioning Support Service stated that the green paper on Special Educational Needs was still awaited and if this was not available, this report would be deferred from the 6 April to the 8 June meeting. The Chair noted that if this report was available for 6 April, this would be a full day meeting, otherwise it would be a morning meeting.

Members were reminded that if they had any suggestions for reports or Task and Finish Groups, that these should be given to the Party Spokespersons for consideration at their next agenda planning meeting.

7. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 3:25 p.m.